

Reuben Ross Barn  
South of Clinton County Line  
Smithville Vicinity  
Clay County  
Missouri

HABS No. MO-1223

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C. 20243

## HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY HABS No. MO-1223

## REUBEN ROSS BARN

Location: South side of Clinton County line, 1.1 miles east of Farm Route F, .3 miles west of Little Platte River, approximately 5 miles northeast of Smithville, Smithville Vicinity, Clay County, Missouri.

USGS Smithville Quadrangle Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates: 15.367210.4368230.

Present Owner: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Kansas City District.

Present Use: None. Scheduled for demolition under plans for the Smithville Dam and Reservoir project. Consideration is being given to its use as a stable along proposed horse trails.

Significance: This barn was built by Reuben Ross in 1925 to service his 140-acre farm. Built to house farm machinery, feed, and livestock, this utilitarian structure incorporated several stylistic influences. The tri-pitched gambrel roof is an adaptation of a three-portal type, seen here with a gambrel instead of gable roof. The design of this barn is a result of the owner being both builder and designer, a situation that was not uncommon in the building of farms.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

## A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: Circa 1925, according to the first owner.
2. Architect: None.
3. Original and subsequent owners: Mrs. Reuben Ross stated that she and her husband purchased the land on which the barn was constructed in 1920. The barn was built in the early years of the Ross ownership. In 1962 (Clay County Warranty Deed Book 1096, page 500) the property was sold to Mr. and Mrs. Joe Billy Long. The property was sold by the Longs to the Corps of Engineers in 1976 (Warranty Deed Book 1234, page 397).

4. Builder, contractor, suppliers: The barn was built by Mr. Ross with the help of a local boy.
5. Original plan and construction: This barn has a tri-pitched gambrel roof with a hay hood. The transverse-crib layout, wherein the main door is found on the gable end of the structure, is not unusual, but here the center passageway is slightly off-center. The barn relates more to a three-portal design, which is similar to a transverse-crib type but has some exterior differences, such as the broken roof line, prominent projecting ridge line and hay hood, and smaller doors.
6. Alterations and additions: Mrs. Reuben Ross believes that the barn has had virtually no alterations made to it since it was built. The tin roof is original.

C. Sources of Information:

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

a. Deed Books: Recorder of Deeds, Clay County Courthouse, Liberty, Missouri.

b. Interviews:

Long, Mrs. Joseph. Most recent owner of property.  
Telephone interview from Kansas City, Missouri,  
August 14, 1978.

Melnick, Robert. Principal investigator for cultural  
resources study done on impact area. Telephone  
interview from Manhattan, Kansas, July 25, 1978.

Ross, Mrs. Reuben. Owner of property at time of barn  
construction. Telephone interviews from Smithville,  
Missouri, August 14 and 16, 1978.

2. Secondary Sources:

Arthur, Eric, and Whitney, Dudley. The Barn: A Vanishing  
Landmark in North America. Greenwich, Connecticut: New  
York Graphic Society, 1972.

Melnick, Robert, principal investigator. "Architecture of  
the Smithville Lake Area." Contract study conducted by  
Kansas State University, College of Architecture, May,  
1977.

Noble, Allen G. "Barns as Elements of the Settlement Landscape of Rural Ohio" Pioneer America 9 (July, 1977): 63-79.

Sloane, Eric. American Barns and Covered Bridges. New York: Funk and Wagnall's, 1974.

Trewartha, Glenn T. "Some Regional Characteristics of American Farmsteads." Annals of the Association of American Geographers 38 (September, 1948): 169-225.

Prepared by Kathryn A. Burns  
Historian  
Historic American Buildings  
Survey  
August, 1978.

## PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

### A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: This simple frame structure with its tri-pitched gambrel roof reflects several stylistic influences.
2. Condition of fabric: Poor.

### B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: This four-bay barn, essentially one floor with loft space, measures 46'6" x 24'3".
2. Foundations: The center two bays have a poured concrete foundation wall that is 8-1/2" wide. In the end bays, each post is set in concrete footings, those of the south bay being barrels filled with concrete. The north wall, which is not load-bearing, rests on stone that is roughly laid, without mortar.
3. Wall construction and finish: The walls are finished in weathered wood siding which is nailed to horizontal members. The north wall is board and batten.
4. Structural system and framing: The structural system is post and beam combined with 2" x 4" stud bearing walls. In the

end bays, posts carry a 2" x 6" beam, with 2" x 6" floor joists resting on the beam. In the center two bays, the exterior walls and the north and south walls are doubled 2" x 4" stud bearing walls. Four posts of two 2" x 4"s run longitudinally in the center of the structure and an additional single post of three 2" x 4"s sits on a large wooden block on the ground just to the south of these four posts. The wall between the two center bays is a 2" x 4" stud bearing wall with a double 2" x 4" top plate carrying loft floor joists and posts. Along the top of these 5-1/2' posts is an upper plate on which the rafters of the gambrel roof rest. The rafters also extend downward to cover the end bays. There is diagonal bracing at the major corners.

5. Openings:

- a. Doors and doorways: There is a large sliding door, 11' wide, on the east facade of the north bay, three hinged wood doors also on the east elevation, and two doors on the west, one of which is a Dutch door. The south elevation has a 9' opening, no door. In the roof peak of the east elevation is a large bottom hinged door and a similar door is in the roof peak of the east elevation.
- b. Windows: There are random openings on both the east and west elevations.

6. Roof: The roof is a tri-pitched gambrel. On the east facade there is a large projecting hood covering a hay lift in the gable peak. Tin sheets cover 2" x 4" rafters.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans:

- a. First floor: The north bay is an open space used for vehicle storage. The north center bay is divided into two rooms, the smaller one being used for hay storage. The use of the larger one is not determined. The south center bay is a large feeding area with a trough along the north wall. The two center bays are separated by a 30" wide passageway just to the north of center. In the south bay a small space is enclosed for an undetermined use, with the rest of the area being stalls with troughs.
- b. Second floor: The loft is an open space used for hay storage.

2. Stairways: A ladder provides the only access to the loft.
3. Flooring: The first floor is dirt, with the exception of the passage and east room of the north center bay, which have concrete. The floor in the loft is wood.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: All surfaces are unfinished except the west room of the north center bay, which is finished with horizontal planks.
5. Doors and doorways: There are two interior doorways of wood planks, with no trim.
6. Mechanical equipment: The barn is equipped with electric lights.

D. Site:

1. General setting: The barn sits atop a hill, with the major elevation facing east-southeast.
2. Outbuildings: The barn is part of a small farm complex. The house dates from the early 1960s. A garage and storage shed are also on the site.

Prepared by Bethanie C. Grashof  
Project Supervisor  
Historic American Buildings  
Survey  
September, 1978

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

The Smithville Survey was undertaken in 1978 by the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) in cooperation with the Kansas City District of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in compliance with Executive Order 11593 as a mitigative effort in the construction of the Smithville Dam and Reservoir. Under the direction of John Poppeliers, Chief of HABS, and Kenneth L. Anderson, Principal Architect, the documentation was prepared on site by Project Supervisor Bethanie Grashof (HABS Office); Historian Kathryn A. Burns (George Washington University); Foreman Darl Rostorfer (University of Pennsylvania); and student architects Kimberly I. Merkel (University of Virginia), Leonida Cubellis (Syracuse University), Jeffrey M. Laufer (Temple University), Barney H. Silver (University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee), and Douglas R. Taylor (Auburn University). Work on the

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drawings was continued in the HABS office by Ms. Grashof and Peter Darlow (McGill University), and completed by Mr. Taylor in 1979. The data was edited in the HABS office in 1979 by Alison K. Hoagland (George Washington University).